

PROCEEDINGS

of a

MILITARY COURT FOR THE
TRIAL OF WAR CRIMINALS

held at

LUNEBURG, GERMANY.

on

THURSDAY, 20 SEPTEMBER, 1945.

upon the trial of

JOSEF KRAMER

and

44 Others.

FOURTH DAY.

Transcript of the Official
Shorthand Notes.

CR/G/2/10)

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(At 1000 hours the Court re-assembled pursuant to adjournment, the same President, Members and Judge Advocate being present)

THE PRESIDENT: I understand there is another Polish interpreter to be sworn.
- Are you satisfied with his capabilities?

LT. JEDRZEJEWICZ: I have not checked him.

THE JUDGE ADVOCATE: I suggest we swear him in and use him as a stand-by interpreter.

(The Interpreter, Private M. Rawson, Black Watch, is duly sworn)

Major A.L. BERNEY is called in and having been duly sworn is examined by COL. BACKHOUSE as follows:-

- Q Is your name Adolphus Leonard Berney? A. Yes.
- Q What is your present appointment? A. I am with 817 Military Government Detachment.
- Q What was your appointment on the 15th April? A. I was sent by headquarters 8 Corps to Colonel Taylor of the occupying forces of the camp to help him and liase between that regiment and 8 Corps.
- Q What time did you arrive at Belsen Camp? A. About 1700 hours.
- Q Who was taking charge of matters when you got there? A. Colonel Taylor and Brigadier Glyn-Hughes.
- Q What was the first duty that was given to you? A. To go back to 8 Corps that night with a message and to return the next day.
- Q When you came back the following day what duty were you assigned to then? A. I was told by Brigadier Sewell of 8 Corps to find any local food dump.
- Q Brigadier Sewell was, I think, the D.A. & Q.M.G. of 8 Corps? A. Yes.
- Q Where did you find the nearest food store? A. At the north of the Panzer Troop School.
- Q How far is that from the camp roughly? A. About three kilometres.
- Q Did you find any German officers there? A. Yes, I found the Hauptmann in charge of the store.
- Q Did you speak to him? A. Yes.
- Q Did he give you any information as to where Camp No. 1 drew its food supply? A. Yes; I understood he was responsible for sending some food from his store to the camp.
- Q Did he tell you what type of food he had supplied to the camp? A. Yes, potatoes and turnips.
- Q Did he tell you whether he had supplied anything in addition to those potatoes and turnips? A. No.

- Q Did he give you any reason why that was the only stuff supplied? A No.
- Q Did you obtain a list of the food in the store? A Yes.
- Q Can you remember any details of the food which was in the store? A Yes, I remember potatoes, 600 tons; tin snuff, 120 tons; sugar, 50 tons, and I cannot remember the exact details of any of the others.
- Q Was there any powdered milk there? A Yes, a considerable quantity.
- Q When you say "considerable quantity", are you speaking in terms of tons or tons? A Tons, as far as I can remember upwards of 20 tons.
- Q Were there any other types of foodstuff besides the ones you have told us about? A Yes, there was cocoa, grain, wheat, and other foodstuffs which I cannot remember.
- Q Did you find whether there was a bakery there or not? A Yes, there is a very large bakery there.
- Q What was the capacity of that bakery? A I was told 60,000 loaves a day.
- Q Was that bakery started? A Yes, it was completely started.
- Q Was it stocked? A Yes, there was a considerable quantity of already made bread and the necessary materials for making bread.
- Q In what sort of quantity were those materials available? A I cannot estimate, but it appeared to me a very vast quantity. I can give you no estimation in tons.
- Q Do you know whether that bakery is still working now? A Yes, it is.
- Q The same staff working there? A Most of them are the same, yes.
- Q From your investigation of the stocks available was there any reason why Camp No. 1 should not have been supplied with food? A I cannot see any conceivable reason.
- Q Did you find any national stores? A Not myself, but I know there was a large quantity in the Regiment Barracks.
- Q Do you know if those national supplies are exhausted yet? A As far as I know they are not entirely exhausted yet.
- Q From the 16th April onwards were you in charge of the general administration in the camp No. 1? A Yes.
- Q What was the position in relation to water when you arrived? A There was none except in what I took to be emergency water reservoir tanks.
- Q How many of those tanks were there? A In the concentration camp area there were three.
- Q Were there any others in the S.F. administrative portion of the camp? A Yes, there was one there.
- Q What was the water like in the tank? A Completely foul in the tanks in the concentration area.
- Q I think as an immediate emergency measure some army water carts were sent in? A That is right.

- Q What steps did you take to restore the water supply ? A. We utilised the fire pumps and hose which we found inside the camp to pump water from a river to the camp itself.
- Q How long did it take you to have water laid on to every cookhouse ? A. About four to five days.
- Q How soon after you got in there was there water available to everybody in the camp in one form or another ? A. About four days after we first entered the camp.
- Q Did you have any materials which were not available in the camp ? A. We found enough materials to build a working water supply throughout the camp.
- Q Did you find any reason why water should not have been provided in that camp ? A. I can think of none.
- Q What was the state of sanitation in the camp ? A. There virtually was none.
- Q What was the condition of the camp as a result ? A. Extremely insanitary and, as one would expect from that large number of people without any sanitary arrangements having been provided.
- Q What arrangements did you make ? A. As soon as we could get on with that job we commenced to build earth latrines by digging holes in the ground and putting wooden latrine boxes over the tops of the holes.
- Q Was there any difficulty at all in digging there ? A. No, the soil was sandy and therefore made digging very easy.
- Q Taking it generally was there anything lacking there to provide food, water, medical supplies, and sanitation ? A. I think if the administration of the camp had wanted to supply those things they could all have been supplied.

Cross-examined by MAJOR WINWOOD

- Q Do you speak and understand German ? A. No.
- Q How did you converse with the Wehrmacht captain in the ration store ? A. Through an official Belgian interpreter.
- Q Who was it that first mentioned the phrase "Camp No. 1" ? A. I do not understand the question.
- Q When you first began the conversation with the Wehrmacht captain did you put the first question to him ? A. Yes, I did.
- Q What was your first question ? (A pause)

THE JUDGE ADVOCATE: I do not think the witness understands the question, and I am afraid I do not understand it either. Would you please make it a little clearer

MAJOR WINWOOD: Was your first question to the captain: "What camps do you supply from food in the stores?" ? A. No, my first question was: "Are you the officer in charge of the stores?".

- Q What was your next question ? A. I cannot remember.
- Q Was the phrase "Camp No. 1" first mentioned by you or by the Wehrmacht captain ? A. The phrase "Camp No. 1" was not mentioned because at that time I did not know it was called No. 1

- Q How did you understand that it was Camp No. 1 that was supplied? A. Because we both referred to it as the concentration camp.
- Q There were in fact two concentration camps, were not there? A. Yes, there were.
- Q Did the Wehrmacht captain indicate which other units he supplied rations to? A. Yes, he did.
- Q What were those units? A. He mentioned the Hungarian regiments, the families of the Hungarian regiments, and the Wehrmacht troops in the camp.
- Q Did he mention that German units as far away as Hanover were supplied by that store? A. He said nothing about Hanover.
- Q Did you get details of daily issues from this store? A. No.
- Q Was the Wehrmacht captain also in charge of the bread store? A. I do not know exactly, but I gathered he was.
- Q Did you get any details of the daily issues of bread? A. No.
- Q Did you have any expert advice that was not available to the Germans with regard to the water supply? A. I do not quite understand. Do you mean the water we obtained from the river, or the technical reason why the supply had stopped?
- Q Obtaining water from the river. A. We pumped the water from the river using the S.S. men as the mechanics who were making the supply.
- Q Did you have any British expert with you? A. Later a R.E.M.E. major arrived to help getting the water supply working.
- Q Was the water in the river fit to drink as such? A. Yes.

Cross-examined by MAJOR MUERO

- Q Am I correct in taking it that all your evidence refers to what is now known as Camp No. 1? A. No, it does not.
- Q Will you please explain to the court to what extent it refers to Camp No. 2? A. Some of my evidence referred to the German army ration store at the north of the camp which was neither Camp No. 1 nor Camp No. 2.
- Q Was it Camp No. 1 which was fed from this store? A. I gathered from the German captain that both the concentration camps were fed from his store.

MAJOR CRAWFIELD: No cross-examination.

Cross-examined by CAPTAIN ROBERTS

- Q There were a certain number of S.S. men in Camp No. 1 were there not? A. Yes.
- Q Do you know whether during the first two or three days any restraint was put on their movements? A. As far as I can remember they were arrested.
- Q Do you know? A. They were arrested, but whether it was within the first two or three days or not, I do not know.

Cross-examined by CAPTAIN BROWN

- Q Do you know if any S.S. men came back or were brought back to the camp after you arrived? A. I do not know.

CAPT. FIELDEN: No cross-examination.

CAPT. COSEBALLY: No cross-examination.

Cross-examined by CAPTAIN MEAVE

Q You have told the court how you used German material to get water from the river. Can you give us some idea of what German transport there was in running order at Camp No. 1? A. I cannot remember any German transport in running order except trailers.

Q Did you find out then how the rations got from the German food store to Camp No. 1? A. No, I did not find that out.

Cross-examined by CAPTAIN PHILLIPS

Q Was Brigadier Sewell at 8 Corps or was he at the concentration camp? A. He came to the concentration camp from 8 Corps.

Q Did he stay there or did he go back? A. He stayed there for two or three days

Q You told the court that various other units were being supplied from the ration points; have you any idea of the total number of rations that had been drawn? A. No, I did not ask.

Q Would it be possible for you to give any sort of estimate at all? A. No, I have no idea.

Q Did you ask the captain in charge of the store on what scale he was supplying the concentration camps? A. No, I did not ask that question.

Q You have, therefore, no idea what the camp was entitled to draw? A. No, except the potatoes and turnips which I have already said.

Q And you do not know how much of them they were entitled to draw? A. No, I do not know.

LT. BOTD: No cross-examination.

CAPT. MURDO: No questions.

Cross-examined by LT. JERZY JENICZ

Q With regard to the number in tons of potatoes, sugar and tin meat you gave, were those numbers given to you by the German officer? A. Yes, they were.

Q Did you check that they were up to date? A. I looked in the store and confirmed that the quantities were approximately correct.

COL. BACKHOUSE: No re-examination.

THE JUDGE ADVOCATE: I find your evidence very vague in regard to many points which I am sure would interest the court if they could get exact information upon it. Were you questioning the German Wehrmacht Hauptmann to find out what stores were available to the British to be used for the benefit of the internees, or were you questioning him to find out what stores had been available to Kramer when running this camp? A. No, the former is correct.

Q You are giving the impression, are you not, that there was a sort of main store in this barrack area from which a number of different organizations had to be fed? A. That is correct, yes.

Q Can you help the court at all as to whether there were any substantial number of mouths which had to be fed in the barrack area as distinct from what we have called No. 1 and No. 2 concentration camps? A. Yes, as I have said, the Hungarians and Wehrmacht troops numbering in all about 5,000.

Q Did you explore the position as to whether the Hungarians, or Wehrmacht, got priority over the internees if there was not sufficient food for everybody, or do you know nothing about that? A. I know nothing about that.

Q My last question is a very important question which I will ask you not to answer if you do not really know what you are talking about. Did you inquire from the Hauptmann whether Kramer could demand the rations that he wanted and if the Hauptmann would not give him them for the internees he could override Hauptmann, or had he to take from the Hauptmann what he, the Hauptmann, liked to give him? A. My conversation with the Hauptmann did not touch on that subject.

COL. BACKHOUSE: I think there was a slip in the German interpretation and I was anxious to interrupt the Polish interpreter so that it might not be repeated. The witness I think said his conversation with the Hauptmann did not touch upon the subject, and I think the interpreter said that his conversation with Kramer did not touch upon the subject.

THE INTERPRETER: I am sorry; that is so.

THE JUDGE ADVOCATE: You have made it plain now that my question related to the conversation between him and the Hauptmann?

THE INTERPRETER: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: Similarly I do not want you to answer this question if you are not sure. Did you get anything from the conversation or did you form the impression when talking to this Hauptmann that Kramer indicated for what he wanted, or that this Hauptmann quartermaster sent down such food as he did when and how he liked? A. I cannot remember the exact words of the conversation, but the impression I got was that he had to send down a certain quantity, which I did not gather, of these articles in some sort of ration scale.

A MEMBER OF THE COURT: Can you tell us whether the water supply system erected by you which was made from local materials was capable of lasting for some time, or was it very temporary? A. No, it would have lasted for some time and did last for some time.

THE PRESIDENT: Has any defending officer any point to raise on the questions put by the court?

MAJOR CRANFIELD: I should like to ask a question arising out of a question put by the learned Judge Advocate. (To the witness) When you mention a figure of 3,000 fed from the ration store, would you agree that that figure would have been very much higher before the British troops arrived? A. I do not know.

(The witness withdraws)

COL. BACKHOUSE: Now, Sir, with your permission, I propose next to show the film of the scenes which were found at Belsen. As to the question of the proper method of proof I have an affidavit, which I propose to put in, by the photographers who took the film and who have seen it run over. Of course, the film is technically an exhibit to the affidavit but I think all the defending officers have agreed that owing to technical difficulties of producing the film to the Court first and putting it back in the machine the film might properly be handed in after it has been re-wound off the machine.

I would explain the film is in two parts and there will be a very short interval between the two, the first part showing the general conditions and the second part showing the S.S. and the conditions in more detail together with the persons who were found there. The only matter I would point out to the Court is that the first part of the film is technically bad; it is difficult to see. It is not a good film of the general conditions. That is not the fault of the cameramen who took the film; it was taken under appalling weather conditions and it is the best that could be produced.

THE PRESIDENT: You are now prepared to show the film?

COL. BACKHOUSE: I think I should put this affidavit in first. It is quite short. "In the matter of War Crimes and in the matter of atrocities at Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp. Affidavit of No. 1770638 Sgt. Harold Haywood, No. 2985965 Sgt. William Lawrie, No. 6469132 Sgt. Michael Lewis all Army Film and Photographic Unit. We Sgt. Harold Haywood, Sgt. William Lawrie and Sgt. Michael Lewis, all Army Film and Photographic Unit, jointly and severally make oath and say as follows:- 1. During the period 16th April, 1945, to 26th April, 1945, both dates inclusive, we each photographed scenes at Bergen Belsen Concentration Camp, near Celle, Hanover, Germany. 2. We have this day seen a cinematographic film made up from the negatives of photographs taken by us at Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp. The lengths of film negative marked respectively A, B and C are copies of extracts of film negatives of scenes at Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp taken by us. Sworn by the above-named Harold Haywood, William Lawrie and Michael Lewis at 6, Spring Gardens, in the city of Westminster this seventh day of August, 1945 before me H.S. Russell Captain Legal Staff, Military Department, Office of the Judge Advocate General."

THE JUDGE ADVOCATE: Do the defence want it translated?

MAJOR CRANFIELD: No.

(Affidavit is marked Exhibit "4", signed by the President and attached to the proceedings.)

COL. BACKHOUSE: I now propose to have the film shown.

THE PRESIDENT: Very well.

(The film is exhibited to the Court.)

COL. BACKHOUSE: I now hand in to the Court the three reels of film which are exhibits A, B and C to Exhibit 4.

(The three reels of film are marked Exhibit "5", signed by the President and attached to the proceedings.)

THE JUDGE ADVOCATE: As far as I can I am satisfied that the certificate on reels A, B and C link up with the affidavit. I think everybody will accept that.

MR H.O. Le DRUILLENEC is called in and having been duly sworn is examined by COL. BACKHOUSE as follows:-

Q Is your name Harold Osmond Le Druillemec? A. Yes.

- Q How do you spell your name? A. D.R.U.I.L.L.E.N.E.C.
- Q You are, I think, a British subject? A. I am.
- Q And you are at present living at Horton Hospital, Epsom, Surrey? A. I am at the moment at Chilwell Beacon in Sussex; I moved to there last Saturday week.
- Q Is your permanent address 7, Trinity Road, St. Helier, Jersey? A. Yes.
- Q Are you by profession a schoolmaster? A. Yes.
- Q Were you living in Jersey in June of 1944? A. I was.
- Q In that month were you arrested by the Germans? A. Yes, I was arrested on June the 5th, D-day minus one.
- Q Why were you arrested? A. We helped a Russian prisoner to escape some 18 months prior to that date and also possessed wireless sets which were forbidden by the Germans.
- Q When you say: "We were arrested", was someone else arrested besides yourself?
A Yes, most of the members of my family were arrested at the same time.
- Q When you were arrested were you first taken to a prison near Rheims and then to Belfort and finally to Neuergamme? A. Yes, but the first name should be Rhein in Brittany.
- Q When did you reach Neuergamme? A. I reached Neuergamme, as far as I can remember, on September 1st, 1944.
- Q When you were at Neuergamme how were you employed? A. I was sent on a kommando from Neuergamme to Wilhelmshaven where I was made an oxy-acetylene welder in the region of the arsenal there.
- Q You left that place and went eventually to Belsen? A. Yes.
- Q On what date did you arrive at Belsen? A. I should think about the 5th April.
- Q How did you reach Belsen? A. By train from Wilhelmshaven to Lüneburg, this very town, and from here by lorry to Belsen.
- Q About what time of day did you arrive? A. I should think about ten o'clock in the evening.
- Q Did you receive any food on arrival? A. No, but some fortunate individuals who had a few cigarettes and, maybe, a bit of bread from the journey had soup - swede or turnip or mangel - offered to them in exchange for these cigarettes.
- THE JUDGE ADVOCATE: May I make a suggestion that as this witness and probably other witnesses are going to tell us about the camp, I wondered whether it would help if we had a plan of the camp in.
- COL. BACKHOUSE: I am afraid we have not got a plan of the camp. There was not an accurate plan made before the camp was burned down and we have not got one.
- THE JUDGE ADVOCATE: Very well.

COL. BACKHOUSE: (To the witness): Where were you taken to? A. I was taken to Block 13.

Q How many other people were there in that block? A. It is rather difficult to make an estimate; I should think on that night it must have been somewhere round four to five hundred.

Q I would like you to describe to the Court in your own words just what conditions were like in that block that night. A. To begin with a French colonel, an old friend of mine from the previous camp, and myself turned into one of the few beds, three tiered bunks they were, in the hut. Some five minutes later some severe blows on the head made us realize that we were not supposed to be there. We gathered from this language and blows that these beds were reserved for the officers and orderlies amongst the prisoners themselves. The colonel and I had made a point of finding some other French people - there was safety in being in groups - and to sit with legs wide apart and other people sitting in between in a group on the floor. Sleep was impossible; the whole hut I should describe as a babal gone mad. Actually that proved to be my luckiest night in Belsen because the next day or two the next kommandos were sent in and had to sleep in this already over-crowded hut. The floor was wet and abominably foul and we had to lay in that but we were allowed two very tattered blankets. The next morning at about half-past three we were roused and sent out of the hut, again the language and blows being the only way of giving orders.

Q Before you pass to the morning, did anybody die in that hut that night?

A Well, that really follows; after we had been out on the appel or roll-call for some time the next morning the hut was cleared of the superficial debris, litter, etc., and then some, maybe seven or eight, dead were taken out and put in the trench - I may add a latrine trench - which ran the whole length of most of these huts.

Q Were there any rafters in the hut? A. Yes, or maybe I should call them joists.

Q Did anyone use those for any purpose? A. Boards were usually put across two rafters by some enterprising prisoners and rather than sleep on the rather murderous floor below they slept across these narrow boards placed across two of the rafters of the hut.

Q Were any of these people suffering from any disease? A. Well, most of the people in the hut were suffering from dysentery and as many of those people on the boards were suffering from this I think I can leave the rest to your imagination.

Q Was it possible for the people below to move out of the way? A. Well, it was possible but if they had they would probably have never found a place to get down again so after a little experience they learned it was better not to.

Q Were you allowed out of the hut at all during the night? A. No. May I add that it was humanly impossible to get out since the whole floor was just one mass of humanity and it would have meant walking across people in order to get out; in any case the door was shut and people were laying against it, but I do think but I would not swear to this, that it was locked as well.

Q What was the atmosphere inside that hut? A. Well, it is rather difficult to put into words; I do not think it is humanly possible to describe that - it was vile. I think I have told you sufficient to make you realize that the smell was abominable; in fact it was the worst feature of Belsen camp. A night in these huts was something I think maybe a man like Dante might describe but I simply cannot put it into words.

- Q When I interrupted you you were just telling us that early the next morning you left the hut? A. Yes.
- Q Perhaps you would go on from there? A. Well, for the first three or four days I was in Belsen we had nothing in particular to do; the appel used to last from about half-past three - I am judging times, I had no watch of course - till about eight or nine o'clock in the morning which in itself was a terrible strain.
- Q Will you describe to the Court what you mean by "appel"? A. The appel is the normal concentration camp roll-call during which time you are supposed to stand in ranks of five, I presumed to make the ranks easy to count, and you are counted and then counted again ad infinitum for some hours; apparently no two men could make the total the same.
- Q Were you allowed to move about during the appel? A. No, you had to stand at attention.
- Q What happened if you moved? A. You received the usual blow on the head. May I add that the weapon used for the blow was a stick some four or five feet long and about one and a half inches thick; it was usually a very hard blow.
- Q Were you given any food before the appel? A. No, nor drink.
- Q What food did you have during the day? A. The first day I had precisely nothing.
- Q How were you employed during the day? A. We did nothing that day, most of us went out into the yard adjoining the block and slept, as was the custom at Belsen, in heaps. At the end of the morning a French friend of mine came to me and asked me if I had inspected the long grey brick-built hut on the other side of our yard. On my replying in the negative he invited me to go and have a look through the windows or rather just holes in the walls where windows had been in this particular hut.

The first window (I mean by that the one nearest to the central road through the camp) showed only a washhouse room, a very crude place, with one or two dead bodies floating about, or hardly floating but reclining on the flooded floor.

The second window gave me a terrible shock. This room was absolutely filled up, and I mean really filled up, with dead bodies. These dead were arranged with the crown of one's head touching the chin of the one just below him and in that way I should think there were many many hundreds per room; it is most difficult to make an estimate of how many.

We then strolled down the yard looking into each window in turn and in every room of that very long hut the sight was precisely the same. I had had some experience with dead people before both at Bremen and at Luneburg but this particular sight made me wonder all the more after the first night at Belsen what sort of Hell I had entered.

The rest of the day was just spent more or less in laying about in the ground outside, just hoping against hope that some food would turn up. This colonel friend of mine particularly was suffering from hunger. I tried to encourage him to cheer him up that food would be coming, but the first day nothing came.

(At 1305 hours the Court is closed.)

(At 1430 hours the court is reopened)
(The accused are again brought before the Court)

Mr. O. le DRUILLENEC is recalled and his examination
is continued by COL. BACKHOUSE as follows:

- Q. Mr. le Druillemec, you had told us of your first night and your first day in Belzen. What was the next night like? A. The next night was rather worse. Some more Kommandos had arrived by then and the hut was still more crowded than the previous night.
- Q. Is there anything else in particular about that night you would like to tell the court? A. I do not think so. If I could mention the second day I should like to add that by that time we realised that although some rather primitive type of sanitation existed it was not used by the vast majority, that more or less everything had occurred sur le place, I should say.
- Q. Did you receive any food or water on the second day? A. Food in the form of soup. I had that day, I should think, about an inch and a half depth in an ordinary army enamel mug which, by the way, I had to go and pick up off a certain heap of discarded effects of the dead, and there being no water to wash it in I just had to eat out of that, like many hundreds of others. May I add something else about that?
- Q. Please. A. We used to have the food given in the hut; actually everyone had to get into the hut first. Then you went out with your little portion, and the rest was more or less like an ordinary fowl house. I suppose you have seen a hen with a worm and five or six chasing after it. We were the same with our soup. We had to keep on giving furtive looks behind and chasing from one corner to the other so as not to drop even a spot of rather precious food - to us, anyway.
- Q. What was the attitude of the S.S. guards to the prisoners? A. I did not see very much of the S.S. during my short stay in Belzen. But on one occasion later I did see an S.S. officer whipping the women in the women's compound near the burial pits because they had lit some fires to do some rather primitive cooking of what we used to term "rutabaga." I think it is a Russian word for swede or mangel.
- Q. The block leaders, what was their attitude? A. Particularly vile. They used to have some soup apparently sent to the block at midday and used to distribute it to the other officers, namely Kapos, vorarbeiters and ordnungsmanner, and also to anyone who had a few cigarettes to exchange, the usual rate of exchange being three cigarettes to one plate of soup, but the vast majority of the ordinary prisoners in the hut never even saw that soup. If we did have a little it was at night.
- Q. Did the S.S. make any attempt to control the block leaders? A. Not as far as I know.
- Q. When did you begin to work? A. On the fifth day I was there. I worked, roughly, for the last five days.
- Q. Prior to beginning to work were the other days much the same as the day you have described? A. More or less. There were one or two rather startling events, of course. One I have in mind particularly was seeing my first friend not quite dead brought out of the hut in the morning and lined up with the people actually dead; then later on still alive dragged off to this hut to the east of block 13, which was being used as a mortuary. One other point. The food was more or less similar; throughout I had about the same amount - I should think that during the whole time I was at Belzen in those first four days only I had all told about a pint of soup. In other words, about an inch and a half depth in an army mug for about four days. On the fourth day the water was turned on for maybe half an hour in that very same hut used as a mortuary - that is the north room, the one nearest to the public road - and after negotiating three or four corpses you would get to the taps, and there, despite the warning of one of my friends that I would catch typhoid if I drank, I did have

one mug full of water.

- Q. Will you now tell the court about the first day you began work? A. I started work, I think, on the fifth day I was at Belzen. In the beginning the work was rather interesting, because we were herded as a block, some 600 or maybe 700 of us from block 13, into what I shall refer to from now on as the mortuary yard. That is the yard on the east of that brick built hut. Unfortunately some 20 orderlies or so were not all of one mind, some 10 would decide to drive us through the south entrance and the other half would decide to herd the block through the northern entrance, the language of blows still being used, of course. Eventually they would become of one mind and gradually we were all herded into this yard to the east of that hut. Again by means of blows, the language we understood pretty well by then, we were made to understand that we had to drag these dead bodies a certain route to what we were to find to be large burial pits. The procedure was to take some strands of humid blanket from a heap, which was a heap where the effects and clothing of the dead had been put at the south east of the yard, tie these strips of blanket or clothing to the ankles and wrists of the corpses and then proceed to walk to the pits.
- Q. What time did you start this work in the morning? A. We used to start daily at sunrise. We were up quite a long time before that.
- Q. Did you have any food before you started? A. No, Sir. In those five days or so I spent on this burial work neither a spot of food nor a drop of water passed my lips.
- Q. During those days you say you started about sunrise. To what time of the day did you go on working? A. I should think about 8 o'clock in the evenings; just about when dusk was falling.
- Q. Will you just describe one of those days? A. After the usual terrible night - quite an inadequate adjective, by the way - we started the appeal first. After about two hours of that we would be herded in the usual manner to this yard. I will assume we knew our duties then; we just got hold of some strips of blankets, tied them to the wrists and ankles of the dead bodies -- which, by the way, we picked out most carefully, in a most finicky manner, if I may put it that way. In this choice our aims were twofold. Firstly, we found the shortest corpse possible; they were all emaciated and more thin than anything I had ever imagined before, so by getting the shortest we were bound to get the lightest. Secondly, choose one that was not too black. Our first task in the morning was to bury the fresh dead that had been brought from the various huts in my portion of the camp to the mortuary yard; not those which were in the hut. Despite the fact it must have been over 2,000 - I should think four blocks were so occupied - it used to take us nearly the whole morning to empty that yard prior to going into the rooms to start burying the old dead. We then left the northernmost gate of this yard with the body dragging behind, usually allowing maybe two metres between the two bodies, that is between the foremost people dragging and the body after. If you allowed more than that a hit on the head made you hurry up to reduce the distance. Then we made our way along the central road towards the burial pits. Along this road stationed at intervals were orderlies to see that the flow of dead to the pits carried on smoothly. Particularly numerous were they near the kitchen, which we passed on our right, and the reservoir water nearby. One of the most cruel things in this particular work was the fact that we passed this water regularly on every trip, and despite the fact we were dying of thirst we were not allowed to touch it or get anywhere near. Nor were we allowed to get to the heap of swede peelings near the kitchen. A few of those would have made us a very fine meal indeed in the state we were in. Nearing the pits I found out that the pits themselves were being dug by so called free workers, free foreign workers. I cannot very well explain my feelings when I first saw one of those pits which already contained many dead and had to throw my particular corpse on top of those others already there. During the dragging of these dead to the pits I noticed on many occasions a very strange sound at the back of the

thigh of many of these dead. First of all I dismissed it as a gunshot wound at close quarters, but after seeing a few more I realized it did not make sense, and asked a friend of mine who was with me pulling one of these dead. He was surprised that I did not know and promptly told me that many prisoners were cutting chunks out of these bodies to eat. On my very next visit to the mortuary I actually saw a prisoner whip out

a knife, cut a portion out of the leg of a dead body and put it quickly into his mouth, naturally frightened by being seen in the act of doing so.

I leave it to your imagination, gentlemen, to realize to what state the prisoners were reduced for men to chance eating these bits of flesh taken out of black corpses.

Q. What was the attitude of the S.S. and of the orderlies you have mentioned while all this was going on? A. To get on with the job as

quickly as possible. I think the whole idea -- this is only my idea -- was to make a good impression on the advancing British Army. We knew it was coming, we could hear the guns, and I think the whole idea was to clear the camp of as many dead as possible before they arrived. I would like you to picture what this endless chain of dead going to the pits must have looked like for about five days from sunrise to sunset. How many were buried I have no idea, it must have been vast numbers -- certainly five figures.

Q. What happened to a prisoner who fell out on this parade? A. You did

not dare fall out, but many collapsed on the way, just lay dead by the

roadside or died by the roadside. They in turn were lifted by a team

of four delegated for the job and in turn were taken to the pits.

People died like flies on the way to these pits. They did not have

the necessary energy to drag even these very light bodies.

- Q What happened to a man who faltered ? A He was usually hit on the head just to make him forget and made to carry on, but many people were cunning, and if no orderlies were round about used to leave their corpses stranded by the roadside, go back to the mortuary for another. The whole idea being they would pass the kitchen or reservoir sooner and they still had hopes, of course that they would reach some food or water.
- Q Were you struck at all yourself during this period ? A Oh, many times.
- Q For what reason ? A Well, you were bound to get hit in the normal course of the day. To begin with you are bound to get hit on the head in the morning getting out of the hut, whether you were out first or out last. You were bound to be hit in getting to the mortuary, too, and all along the way to the pits. They were just odd blows here and there given, I suppose, for the fun of the thing - I do not know. One ceases to question in a concentration camp why things happen; one is taught in the very beginning just to accept things as they are and never wonder why things happen.
- Q Were any of the guards armed with firearms ? A Yes, all the guards in the look-outs and any that walked in the camp. I mean by that S.S. or later Hungarian guards were naturally all armed.
- Q Did you hear or see any of them use any of their arms ? A In the first few days, not frequently. I did hear some shots, but I saw no results. In the last few days the shooting was - I could almost say furious - barely a minute of the day or evening passed without hearing a shot somewhere in the camp, and usually it was a whole volley of shots, not just a single shot.
- Q Did you see any shooting ? A Yes, plenty of it.
- Q For what were people being shot ? A Usually for no reason at all. Sometimes for a hidden reason which we only learned after many dozens had been killed. I will give you an example. At the north entrance of the mortuary yard many people had been killed before we realised that the particular guard in charge of that gateway wanted to see people go through at the double dragging the dead body behind. I may add, to be fair to these people, that he was a member of the Hungarian guard.
- Q Was the shooting confined to Hungarians ? A No, in the first few days we did not see any Hungarians. There were some shots but they were not frequent. There were quite a few in the last few days when I was in Belzen, when the Hungarian guards took over; it was simply terrible, hundreds were shot per day.
- Q Did you see the results of any beatings ? A The beatings were usually confined to blows on the head. I did see one receiving some 25 strokes; they were not particularly terrible, nothing like as bad as my previous camp, as a matter of fact, but the slap dash blows on the head during the day were very frequent and very very nasty.
- Q I think almost immediately the camp was liberated you were released ? A Yes, as far as I know - and I have had this confirmed since - I was the first man out.
- Q Have you been in hospital ever since ? A Up to last Saturday week.
- Q Can you recognise any particular guard who either shot or ill-treated people when you were there ? A (After looking at the accused) No, I do not think I can. They rather looked all similar to me at the time. I do not think I could pick one out.
- Q Did you ever see any guard help or assist any of the prisoners ? A Never. May I add that guards in the concentration camp - I am talking in general when I saw this - are brutish and the prisoners in time become brutish and such a thing as human kindness is quite unknown in such a place. Could I add one more statement ?

Q Yes. A If the Court would like to hear it. I do not know if I shall succeed in giving you an idea of what life in Belzen was like on those last five days. I should think it is for the Court to decide that. It will only take two minutes.

Q If you can add something further, yes. A I would like to try to make everyone realize how first starvation, absolute starvation, secondly, no water at all for some six days, thirdly, lack of sleep - I could only snatch two or three hours sleep, maybe not so much; we had no watches to time ourselves - sleep near the burial pits was quite impossible, fourthly, to be covered in lice and delousing oneself three or four times a day absolutely useless. If one sat inside or outside one was still covered within five or ten minutes. Then the fatalistic attitude between the prisoners towards what the end would certainly be, the grimatorium or the pit. Add to this the foul stench and violence of the place, the scenes which apparently horrified the whole of the world, which we saw by the whole of daylight day by day. The blow on the head, the hideous work and, in the last three days, the Hungarian guards shooting at us just as if we were rabbits from all directions. If you can picture all this, the sum total as it were, hitting a man always, then may be you will get a remote inkling of what life was like in Belzen in those last three days.

Cross-examined by MAJOR WINNOCCH.

Q What was the condition of the other prisoners who arrived at Belzen with you? A I do not know exactly how many died, but I know that many did. About 150 of us as I told reached Belzen, only a remnant, and I know that many thousands died in those ten days.

Q What was their condition when they first got to Belzen? A Most of the Kommandos arrived in Belzen by marching there and were pretty fit.

Q I think you came by transport, did you? A No did, because it happened our people had been ordered at Lunenburg by the R.A.F. just prior to getting to Belzen.

Q Was your transport expected at Belzen? A I have no idea.

Q If it had been expected, it would be reasonable to assume there would have been nobody available? A I cannot answer that. We were just ordinary prisoners and we had also learned never to question things. I am afraid it never dawned on me to think about it.

Q Were you always in Block 13? A The day the British tanks first appeared we were transferred to Block 26. Block 13 was generally swept and garrisoned early that morning and we found ourselves transferred to this new block. I think again it was to make a good impression on the advancing British Army. There had been some grass growing round this hut and when the tanks passed through I was actually having my first meal for five days; I was eating grass.

Q Is it true that every day you were in Belzen the cookhouses were actually working? A I think they were working.

Q Was the food brought to block 13 every day? A I have no idea. Some was brought in the first few days, but on the last five or six days, the last five days actually, we only came back from our work in the burial pits about 9 o'clock - I can only judge the time by the dusk - there was no soup. That is all I can say; there just was not any.

Q In block 13 how many of the inmates had blankets? A I cannot answer that. All I know is there was a pile of blankets on the left of the door as you went in. The first ones took one or two blankets as they desired, and I presume the rest did not have any.

Q And yet when you arrived at 10 o'clock at night you managed to get two

blankets ?

A Yes, I brought one myself from here and I picked up one of these humid ones on the left hand side of the door. I may add the hut was not so crowded then as it was a night or two later.

Q I think you said that the appel started at half past 3 in the morning ?

A We only judged that time. We were told it was half past 3; we had no watch.

Q It was dark ?

A Pitch dark.

Q Is it true to say that during the time you were at Belsen some real attempt was being made to bury the corpses ?

A An attempt was made. In fact it was more than an attempt, I think it was successful. We did bury many thousands in the last four or five days.

Q Do you know from whom the order came to bury the bodies ?

A I have no idea; we would not have known that.

MAJOR MURRO: No questions.

Cross-examined by MAJOR CRAIGFIELD

- Q Were all the S.S. personnel and blockaltesters that you came into contact with men? A. Yes, I saw some S.S. women the first night I came into the camp, but only in the entrance of the camp watching the Kommandos coming into the camp from various directions.

Cross-examined by CAPTAIN ROBERTS

- Q Would you say that at the time of the arrival of the British your own health was as good as any of the internees? A. I thought it was but it proved not to be the case.

CAPT. BROWN: No questions.

Cross-examined by CAPTAIN FIELDEN

- Q You have spoken of guards in the camp being responsible for ill-treatment and shooting. Are you suggesting that all the S.S. were concerned in Belsen?
- A. No, I made a point of mentioning, I think, that the shootings I saw on the last three days, and at one particular gate - the north gate of the mortuary yard - were Hungarian guards.
- Q You have referred to ill-treatment by guards in the camp. Are you suggesting that all the S.S. personnel in the camp of your own knowledge indulged in such activities? A. Most of the guards, or so-called guards anyway, who were in charge of the huts were not S.S. at all, but under the orders of the S.S. were blockaltesters, Kapos, vorarbeiter, and the like.
- Q There must have been to your own knowledge many other S.S. men in the camp other than those guards? A. I did not see S.S. men in the vicinity of my compound during my stay there. I did see one ill-treating the woman I mentioned, and very very few others just strolling around. In all the concentration camps - I have seen three - in every case the S.S. live in a very well protected compound outside the actual concentration area, and the discipline and administration of the concentration camp itself is depused to prisoners. That is the viciousness of this concentration camp to have prisoners in charge of prisoners.

Cross-examined by CAPTAIN CORBALLY

- Q Did I understand that when the time came for the prisoners to have a meal food was brought to your hut and you all had to go inside the hut before the food was distributed to you? A. That is so. Actually quite a few methods were tried and failed absolutely. It meant that perhaps twenty or thirty prisoners got food and the rest went without. In the first days the method was to go into the hut - the soup bin was near the door - and then pass outside into the yard with your mug or plate of soup.
- Q I expect you had to make a queue inside the hut? A. It was usually just a mass. I remember the best way was the very last time I had some food. We were behind some barriers - I forget what they were - and people were called out one by one; they were just pointed to and they went out and got their soup near the doorway and walked out into the yard.
- Q And the person who ladled out the soup would be the blockaltester or an assistant?
- A. Yes, in our case it was an assistant.
- Q Did you ever see internees trying to rejoin the queue after they had had their ration? A. Yes, all sorts of schemes were tried for that; that was quite natural.

Q Was there any system employed to prevent that happening? A. Yes, people were stationed at all the windows and at the doors or breakages through the side of the hut to prevent people doing that. In fact, cunning was met with cunning.

Q Have you ever seen an internee come up to where the soup was being ladled out just too late to find that it had all disappeared? A. Yes, that occurred on quite a few occasions. It was very rare at any one distribution to find it was enough to go round even with the small amount that was put in.

Q Did you ever see anyone caught coming up for a second bowl of soup? A. I cannot swear that I did. Most people were prevented from getting into the queue again. Many attempts were made but there were very few successes.

Q Would you agree that one of the reasons why the soup bin did not go round all the internees in the hut was that some people succeeded in getting a second helping? A. No, I would not agree with that.

Q What do you think the reason was? A. I have no idea.

Cross-examined by CAPTAIN NEAVE

Q From your experience at Belsen, if something had suddenly happened some day, and all the blows had been cut out and no hitting, was there anything the blockaltesters and the Kapos could have done to improve the general conditions in the camp? A. I suppose there was nothing that could not be improved. It is rather a difficult question to answer.

THE JUDGE ADVOCATE: I don't think he quite understood the question. Would you put it again?

CAPT. NEAVE: If suddenly one day something had happened in Belsen and all the blows had been cut out, was there anything the blockaltesters and the Kapos could have done to improve the general condition in Belsen camp? A. I think I had better not answer that. I do not think I can give a genuine answer. I have never bothered to think it out before. Naturally everything could be improved, but no attempt was ever made to do it, so if they had tried I do not know whether they would have succeeded or not.

Q In your own recollection of Belsen, did a blockaltester have sufficient responsibility to go and make a complaint about the conditions to his S.S. superior? A. I have no idea.

CAPT. PHILLIPS: No questions.

LT. BOYD: No questions.

Cross-examined by CAPTAIN KUNRO

Q You said I think that the blockaltester and Kapos were under the control of the S.S. as, in fact, they were? A. Yes, that is so.

Q Would it be true to say that these internees were as frightened of the S.S. as you were, these Kapos and blockaltesters were as frightened as you were? A. I do not know. I did not come into contact sufficiently with the S.S. to make a genuine answer to that.

Q Would you think that a Kapos or blockaltester would be punished by the S.S. if he did not do his job as the S.S. thought he should do? A. Again, I have no idea. I have never been a Kapos or blockaltester.

LT. JEDZEJEWICZ: No questions.

COL. BACKHOUSE: No re-examination.

THE JUDGE ADVOCATE: Did you or did you not get the impression that the blockaltester

and the Kapos in addition to being under the control of the S.S. were under their protection in the sense that if any attack had been made upon them they could have relied upon the S.S. men to support their authority?

A. Yes, I think so.

Q Would that be fair to suggest that? A. Yes, I think so.

Q Please say if you do not know, but do you know how these internee

officials came to get their post? Were they appointed by S.S. men or

Kramer against their wishes, or did they volunteer? I do not know whether

you can answer that? A. I am afraid I am not quite sure myself.

THE JUDGE ADVOCATE: Very well, we will not have it.

- Q In your first four days I understood you to say that you got about an inch and a half depth of soup on each day in a mug? A. Yes.
- Q Can you help the Court by indicating how you came to get that quantity, whether it was the sort of quantity that everybody was getting or was it just accidental you got that amount? A. That was the regular quantity that was being given to the whole lot.
- Q There was some kind of attempt to organize that each person should get a certain amount; is that right? A. In those first days, yes.
- Q Did you get the impression or did you not in the ten days that you were at Belsen that the conditions were deteriorating towards the end in the sense that many more internees were flooding into the camp and that such arrangements as there had been for the distribution of soup, little in amount as it was, and water, were getting worse? A. I did not quite get that impression; things were deteriorating but not necessarily because of the numbers flowing into the camp. Conditions got worse and worse and finally ended with shootings on the last three days, for which I could find no excuse at all.
- A MEMBER OF THE COURT: Would you tell the Court how conditions at Belsen compared in general terms with the other camps which you have been in?
- A In the two previous camps in which I had been there was an attempt made at cleanliness, though the atrocities probably, or sadism, in the other camps at Wilhelmshaven, Arbeits Kommando and Neuengamme were worse than Belsen, I think I can fairly describe Belsen as probably the foulest and vilest spot that ever soiled the surface of this earth.
- ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE COURT: Could you tell the Court if you actually saw anyone except the Hungarian actually shoot an internee? A. No, I heard shots from various portions of the camp at intervals, not infrequent intervals, but I never saw the results until the Hungarians actually started in the last three days.
- THE PRESIDENT: I just want to get one point quite clear. These appeals, the waking up and forming up in your working parties and that sort of thing, as I right in the note I made that they were all run by what I call the prison leaders, the leaders from the prisons, as distinct from the S.S. personnel in the camp? A. Yes, entirely done by the prisoner leaders.
- Q Do you know in these last four days, when I think you said no food was issued, whether it was actually issued to other prisoners in your hut or to the prison leaders and you merely missed it because you were away, or was there no issue at all so far as you know? A. I do not know, but I know I did not see any soup at all in the last five days.
- THE PRESIDENT: Has any defending officer any question he wishes to put on the points raised by the Court?

(No Response.)

(At 1700 hours the Court adjourns until
1000 hours Friday 21st September, 1945.)

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PROCEEDINGS

of a

MILITARY COURT FOR THE
TRIAL OF WAR CRIMINALS

held at

LUNEBURG, GERMANY.

on

FRIDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER, 1945.

upon the trial of

JOSEF KRAMER

and

44 Others.

FIFTH DAY.

Transcript of the Official
Shorthand Notes.